

ideas for parents

Practical Suggestions for Building Assets in Your Child

FAST FACTS

ASSET #38: Self-Esteem

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they have high self-esteem.

38%
of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.*

What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 key building blocks to help kids succeed. "Self-esteem" is one of four positive identity assets.

* Based on Search Institute surveys of almost 100,000 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States.

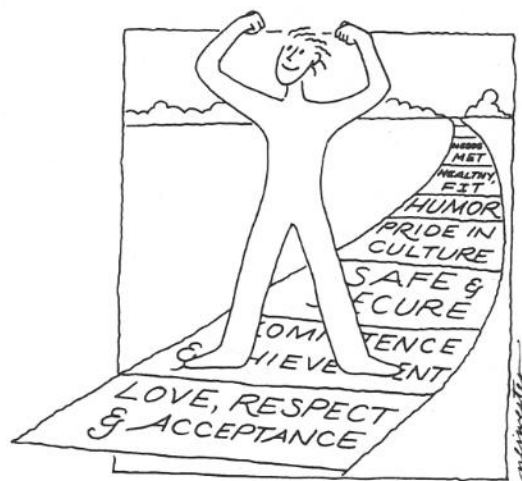
High Self-Esteem: Where Does It Come From?

We all know what pulls us down when it comes to how we feel about ourselves. Guilt.

Prejudice. Rejection. Neglect. Disrespect. Put-downs. Ridicule. Exploitation.

But what pulls us up? Author and psychologist Dr. Louise Hart, a leading educator on self-esteem development, says high self-esteem comes from:

- Love, respect, and acceptance.
- Being taken seriously.
- Being listened to.
- Having your needs met and taken seriously.
- Honoring uniqueness.
- Being healthy and fit.
- Having meaning and purpose in life.
- A sense of humor, laughter, and play.
- Taking pride in your cultural heritage.
- Having choices and a sense of personal power.
- Having safety and security.
- Doing good.
- Competence and achievement.



She suggests families talk about their strengths and focus on positive things about each other. "We make healthy children by working from the inside out," she says, "by cherishing and accepting them as they are and nurturing their growth and development."

talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- How do you feel about yourself right now? Why?
- Think back to when you were younger. When did you feel really good about yourself? What was happening? When did you feel bad about yourself? Why?
- When you feel the best about yourself, what activities are you doing?

The Difference Between Boys and Girls

Who is more apt to like themselves, think they have a number of good qualities, and be glad for who they are?

Boys are. Search Institute

researchers discovered that 54% of boys have a positive self-esteem whereas only 40% of girls do. Why do you think that is?

time together

Three ways to help your child feel better about her- or himself:

1. Write specific things you like about your child on Post-it notes. Hide them around your child's room.
2. Start a "We did it!" journal. At family meetings, have family members individually name things they've accomplished or things they've noticed other family members accomplish. Periodically celebrate those successes.
3. Have each family member create a T-shirt. Buy plain T-shirts and fabric paints and have each person write words (or draw pictures) of what he or she likes to do or does well. Have everyone wear these T-shirts on the same day.

Quick Tip:
Build self-esteem
by being more
nurturing.

More Stuff You Can Use

The Winning Family. This book gives practical ideas on how to increase self-esteem in your children and yourself. (Available from Celestial Arts, P.O. Box 7123, Berkeley, CA 94707; 1-800-841-2665.)

Q & A About Self-Esteem

Q: Can a parent really affect a child's self-esteem?

A: Yes, says Jean Illsley Clarke, author of *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair*. "Life's positive and life's negative offerings are the areas in which adults have great power and opportunity to impact self-esteem," she writes in her book. She suggests parents can provide positive opportunities for their children to succeed, give positive messages to their children, love their children even when they make poor choices, and give specific alternative suggestions when they want their children to act in different ways.

Final Word

"Positive self-esteem comes from making the commitment to respect, accept, and love yourself completely. It is the best gift you can give to yourself—and your children."

—Louise Hart, Ph.D., author of *The Winning Family: Increasing Self-Esteem in Your Children and Yourself*

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